# filmic space

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The projects collected here under the banner of Filmic Space are seen as an extension of the ideas brought to light in the publication *Interior Cities*. *Interior Cities* represents the outcomes of the last seven years of the program grouped within specific conceptual concerns. The book chronicles ideas of spatial perception, sensing space, elemental space, contextual space, cross cultural space, space of the imagination, incisions into the metropolis and virtual space.

The body of *Interior Cities* evolved from design studio lecturing within the Interior Design degree at RMIT. Rather than mere exercises in the development of practical and professional skills, the studio is seen as a research opportunity for academics and practitioners to explore ideas they see relevant to the culture of design. For students, studios provide dynamic projects responding to current issues.

In the six months since the publication of *Interior Cities*, a new chapter in the ongoing language of space has begun to take shape. Without direction or prompting, a number of similar ideas using ideas of cinema, movie making and film theory as the generative starting point for the design of architectural space began to perpetuate. This development is not surprising — the twentieth century has been the century of cinema, an art form wholly specific to our time.

Every one of us has been brought up watching moving images on television and at the cinema. From a very early age we become visually literate to the techniques of story telling and narrative inherent in film and television. Action, horror, dramas, comedies, video clips and cartoons/ commercials assail us with fragmented, superimposed, slow motion and staccato bursts of imagery and story-line we can easily comprehend and enjoy. Filmic techniques are perhaps the visual language with which we are most familiar.

As we move into an age with expanding possibilities in computer spatial 'modeling' programs, desktop filmmaking and the creation of multimedia environments, the specific addressing and manipulation of time-based techniques in the design of space becomes imperative.
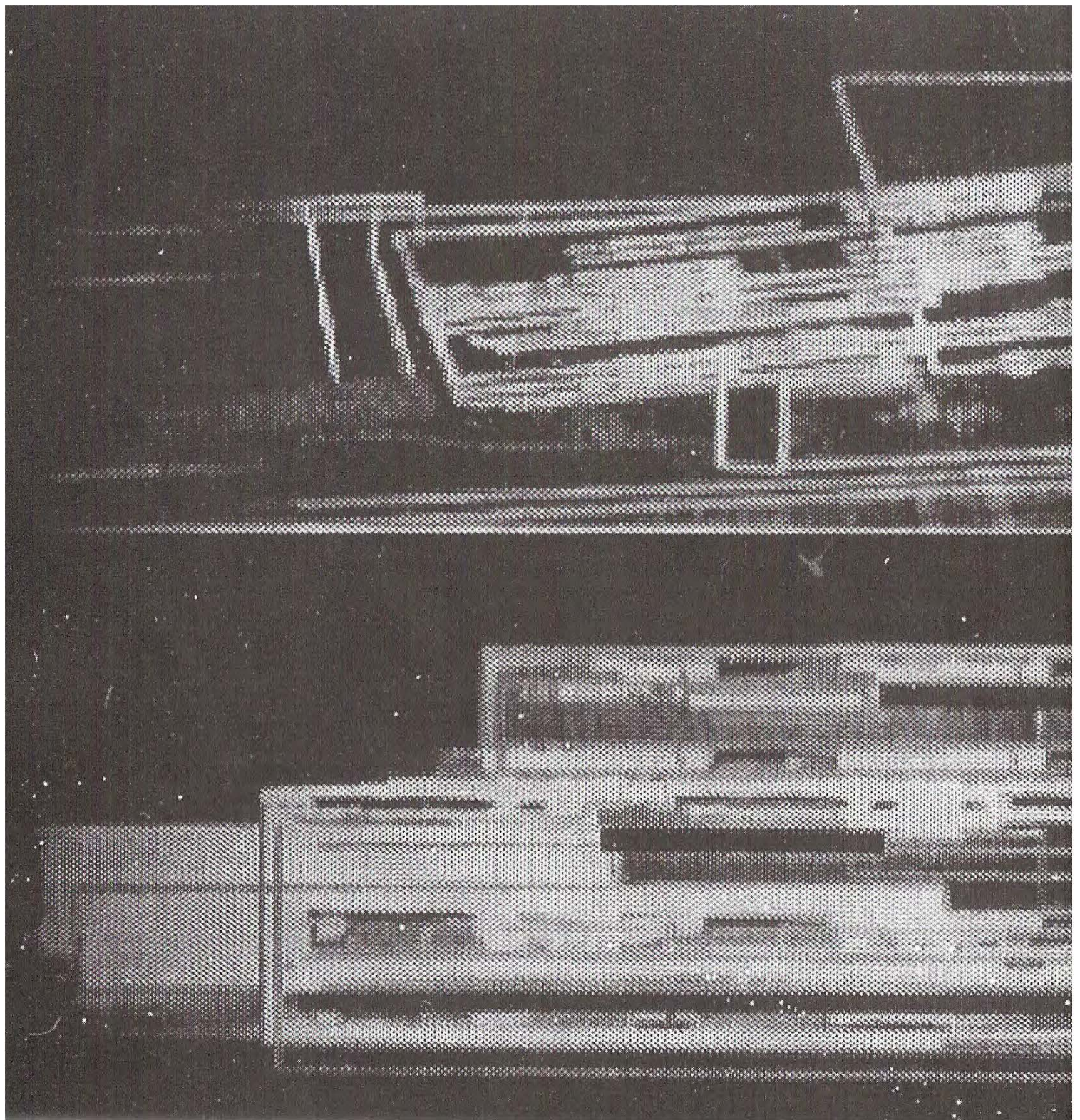
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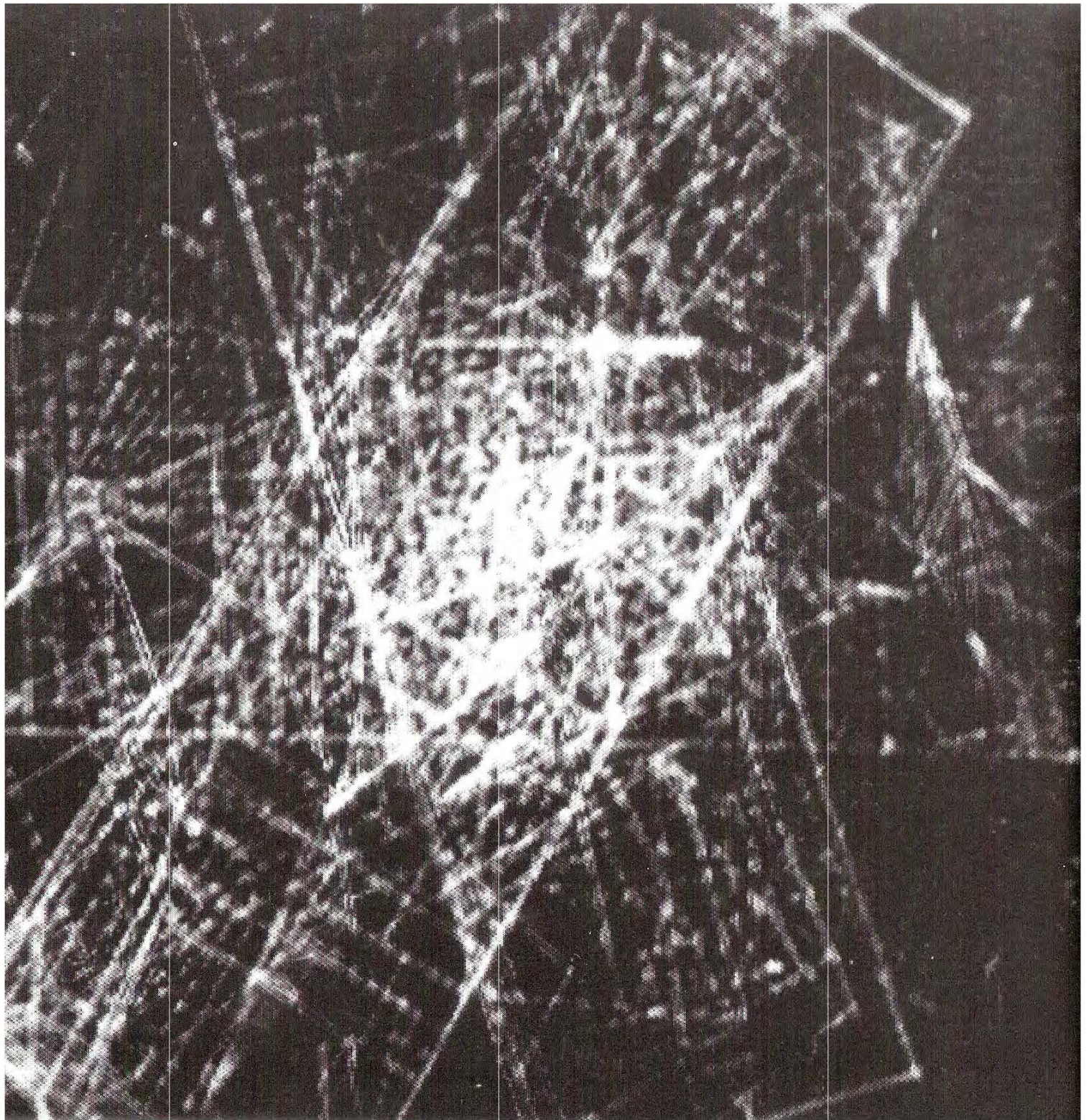
Students at RMIT have long been exposed to such technologies with specific courses in short film making (see 'Electronic Observatory' in *Interior Cities*), and the editing of multimedia slideshow events and electives in design for film and television. The distinction with the design studios presented here is that they take on board these techniques, not as ends in themselves, but as the starting point of the creative process.

In 'Vision and Architecture', Sophia Anapoliotis and Ashley Lane conducted detailed investigations into two opposite poles of spatial perception. Students were asked to undertake a series of photographic studies initially using the idea of the still camera, which affords controlled and panoramic views where people become a flashing trace of movement as they pass by. This was followed by the idea of the moving camera where the viewer negotiates space, recording the fragments, glimpses, peripheral views and sequences that create our experience of space. These two experiential poles and the readings and language of space they imply were then combined and refined in design schemes for urban passageways.

Katie Holt Damant and Mark Damant's studio 'Splitting Space' took similar ideas, asking for an exploration of the microscopic and telescopic. Students were then asked the difficult and ambiguous question of creating a continuous space between these two extremes, where the goal was to invoke a suspension of time.

In 'Out of Focus', Toby Reed and Eliza Hutchinson took a more immediate approach to these issues. Students used video cameras to record scale models (of famous modernist houses) which they had constructed. They experimented with lighting and camera angles to film the models and based many of these decisions from analysis of their favourite film genre. From the videos students chose a number of stills and imported them into the Adobe Photoshop program. Photoshop was seen not as an end in itself but as a tool for uncovering aesthetic and structuring potentials to be manifest within architectural design.

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IDEA

left   –   superimposition of multiple viewpoints
overleaf   –   layered multimedia screens creating real/virtual hybrid spaces
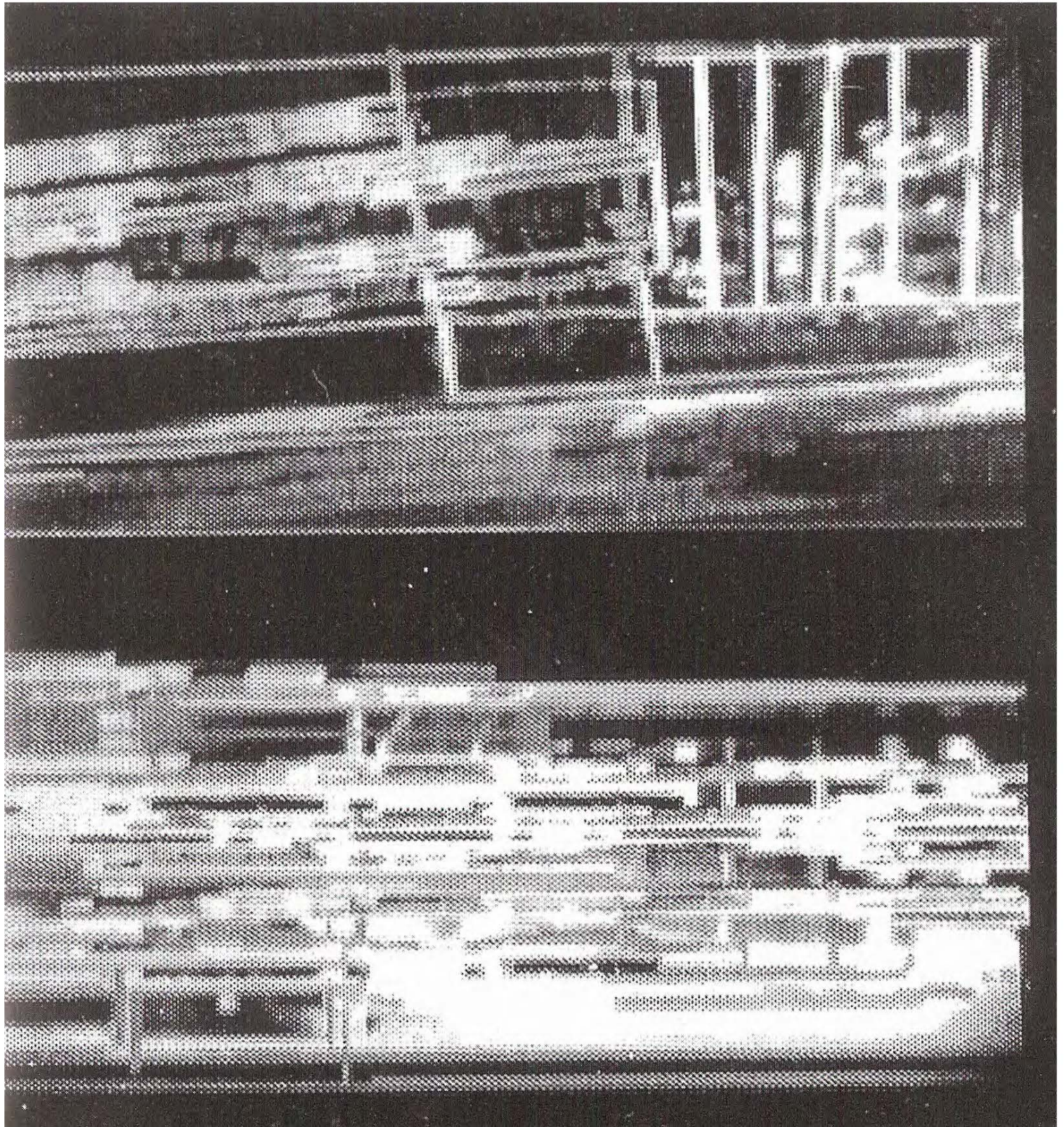
Photoshop commands have much in common with film techniques. Ideas such as zoom, stretch, blur, and superimpose are all common effects used by filmmakers. Students began to produce sophisticated and evocative images guiding their aesthetic intention for their design projects. Using the Photoshop images as a creative trigger, students sought to recreate the mood, texture and depth of these images within the functional and programmatic needs of each spatial design.

The interpretation of the still images were woven back into a filmic narrative particular to the design, which in turn guided the development of the designs and created complex architectural spaces with finely tuned materiality and ambience.

The projects presented here are by no means a comprehensive survey of the issues of Filmic Space. They do however suggest new approaches to the conceptualising of space in time. This projection of 'four-dimensionality' is difficult perceptual ground for architects and designers to grasp. Problems of notation, documentation, and presentation of these ideas raise even further issues, as designers attempt to elevate the flatness of plan and section, and the static nature of perspective and model to a true and dynamic rendering of the experience of space.

plan as a series of overlapping filmic narratives – right